

The United States of America

GEOGRAPHY

The USA is the third largest country in the world (almost 10 million sq km) with a population over 300 million people. The U.S. has land borders with Canada (to the North) and Mexico (to the South). The states are bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west, the Atlantic Ocean on the East, and the Gulf of Mexico to the Southeast.

Highest mountain is Mount McKinley (6,138 m) in Denali National Park, Alaska.

Longest river is Mississippi (3,730 km).

USA consist of 50 states with the capital city Washington, situated in District of Columbia (D.C.).

Two states are separated from the US mainland - **Alaska**, the largest and least populated US state.

Hawaii is the US state situated on islands. Hawaii is popular tourist destination, where Honolulu is the capital. Famous naval base Pearl Harbor, connected with the history of the WWII. Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the US into WWII (December 7, 1941).

POLITICAL SYSTEM

The US government consists of 3 branches:

Executive, that is the president and his cabinet (US does not have a prime minister)

Legislative, that means the Congress, made up of the Senate with two Representatives from each state, and the House of Representatives, again from each state according to a number of population.

Judicial power is represented by Supreme Court.

There are **two main political parties** in US: more conservative Republicans and more liberal Democrats.

HISTORY

Christopher Columbus discovered America for Europeans in 1492. The first colonies were established on the East coast of Northern America (in Virginia, Plymouth, Jamestown).

Very important part of American history is the **War of Independence**. The first colonies refused to pay taxes to Britain. The first conflict was in Boston - colonists dressed as Indians threw all the British tea into Boston harbour, this event is known as Boston Tea Party. The war started in 1775. The colonists were led by Thomas Jefferson and on July 4th, 1776, the **Declaration of Independence** was signed and adopted in Philadelphia. By adopting it, the US declared its independence from Britain and establishing of the United States of America. July 4 is now celebrated as the Day of Independence, popular holiday with parades, fireworks and sporting events. The war lasted till 1783.

In the 19th century, slavery was the big problem in US states. In 1861 it led to a **Civil War** between agricultural South and industrial North. The president Abraham Lincoln wanted freedom for all Americans, including slaves. In the South, slaves were important for labour work on farms, but industrial North was against slavery. The war ended in 1865, and after the Union defeated the southern Confederation in the war, slavery was abolished throughout the United States in the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution.

MAIN REGIONS and important cities:

New England

The first European settlers arrived to America in the 17th century and started to settle in this region. It soon became the cultural and economic center. It is also home to the prestigious universities, Harvard and Yale.

Mid-Atlantic

This region is the center of industry. It is densely populated with some of the biggest cities of the USA.

The most populous city is **New York** (over 8 million people). It is also the center of the New York metropolitan area, which is one of the most populous urban areas in the world. The city consists of five boroughs: The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island.

N.Y.C. is the financial centre (with famous Wall Street and New York Stock Exchange) and cultural center, as well. There are well known places like Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, theatres on Broadway).

Important landmarks and tourist spots: The Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Central Park, Washington Square Park, Rockefeller Center, Times Square, the Bronx Zoo, New York Botanical Garden, shopping along Fifth and Madison Avenues.

Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty (officially entitled Liberty Enlightening the World, dedicated on October 28, 1886 by people of France) is a monument commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Statue of Liberty is 93 m high and weighs 205 tons.

Washington, D.C.

It is the capital city and the seat of the president and government. The seat of president is in the White house. The presidential office is called Oval Office.

The government is situated in Capitol. Lots of big monument is placed in the capital city. They are mainly in the center: Washington Monument, Lincoln memorial, and the Capitol building on the Capitol Hill.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia was an important town in an early American history. It was the social and geographical center of the original 13 American colonies. The American Revolution (War of Independence) started here and the Declaration of Independence was signed here. Nowadays, Philadelphia is a commercial, educational, and cultural center, the largest city in Pennsylvania and the sixth-most-populous city in the United States.

The South

The South is economically, historically, and culturally a distinct region. With its warm climate it developed an economy based on agriculture. In the last few decades, the South has become more industrial and urban than in the past.

The Mississippi river is the important feature of Southern states. It is also a river of history. Steamboats on the Mississippi are still in use, not for carrying goods, but they served as a tourist attraction.

New Orleans - It was founded by French in 1718 and it has its own character and unique culture. The original city of New Orleans is the French Quarter. Also, it is a city of music - jazz and blues really started here. There are lots of music clubs, jazz festivals, and street musicians.

Atlanta - is sometimes called Capital of South. Of the 500 largest companies in the US, 450 have offices in Atlanta. It is also the seat of Coca-Cola company.

Florida is famous for its beaches - Miami, Palm Beach, Daytona Beach.

The Midwest - center of American agriculture and industry

It is a large, economically important region. It contains major industrial cities (Detroit, Chicago) and much of America's farmland. Great Lakes area has many hills, lakes and forests. South is flat and has good soil for farming. Great Plains are to the west, there is farming, too.

The Southwest

Geographically, the region ranges from humid lands in eastern Texas to dry prairies in Oklahoma and mountains and deserts in Arizona and New Mexico. It was home to Native American tribes and even now there are Indian reservations.

Texas is the second largest state (after Alaska) and an important center of oil production.

The West

Rocky mountains run from the north to the south. It is popular area for hiking and camping. It was first settled by Spanish missionaries but now has a variety of immigrants from all around the world.

California is known for its film industry (Hollywood) and computer industry (Silicon Valley).

The lowest point in the US is Death Valley in California (85m below sea level).

INTERESTING PLACES

Niagara Falls lay on the border between the Canadian province of Ontario and the U.S. state of New York. Niagara River was created by combining the Great Lakes. Niagara Falls are 50 m high and consist of Horseshoe Falls, the majority of which lies on the Canadian side of the border, and American Falls on the American side.

Grand Canyon

Grand Canyon is one of the first national parks in the USA. This national park was established in 1919. President Theodore Roosevelt was a major proponent of preservation of the Grand Canyon area. It is a steep-sided gorge carved by the Colorado river in the state of Arizona in the United States of America. It is 466 km long, wide from 500 m to 24 km, maximum depth is about 1600 m. In the area are great opportunities for sports, including rafting.

Yellowstone

It's the oldest national park in the world (1872) and is known for its wildlife. (bison, elk, wolves, Grizzlies).

The park was named after the Yellowstone river, which flows through this territory and whose line the shores high yellow rocks. Yellowstone river has carved two colorful canyons, the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and the Black Canyon of the Yellowstone.

National park is located primarily in the U.S. state of Wyoming, though it also extends into Montana and Idaho.

There are about 280 waterfalls and mountain springs, hot springs, mud volcanoes, mountain lakes, fumaroles, canyons and geysers (circa 300). The most famous geyser is Old Faithful, which throws the water to a height of 50 m. Yellowstone Lake is the largest high altitude lake in North America.

Monument Valley

Monument Valley is located in the borders of Arizona and Utah. It is known for its film industry (Western) and tobacco industry. The valley includes large stone structures.

Disneyland

Disneyland is an American theme park in Anaheim, California. The park owned and operated by the Walt Disney company.

Las Vegas is the largest city in Nevada, it is the city famous for its gambling and nightlife. It contains most of the hotel complexes, which serve as a giant casino. There are 18 of the 25 largest hotels in the World.

Mount Rushmore

This monument is located in the Black Hills, South Dakota. It represents portraits of four important personalities, carved into the rock. They are: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodor Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. Since 1947, the second huge monument has been built - the Crazy Horse Monument, showing the famous Sioux Indian leader on horseback.

Cape Canaveral in Florida

Kennedy Space Center - you can see the place, where astronauts are trained.